

Michelle Harven: [00:04](#) This is Force For Hire.

Desmon Farris: [00:05](#) A deep dive in to private military contracting and how it's transforming the battlefield.

Michelle Harven: [00:09](#) I'm Michelle Harven.

Desmon Farris: [00:10](#) And I'm Desmon Ferris.

Michelle Harven: [00:12](#) We've talked a lot about the business of military contracting, in a broad sense, but a very practical question people have is, how do you become a contractor? With so many of the positions being kept confidential, how to prospective employees even find the work? And what kind of training and background is needed for the more dangerous or uncommon jobs?

Desmon Farris: [00:33](#) As we've mentioned, many contractors or third country nationals who are foreign subcontractors. We'll be looking more closely at this workforce in a different episode. For this episode, we wanted to talk about the job market today. A majority of contractors are veterans or have some sort of specialty training, but how do they make that transition?

Michelle Harven: [00:54](#) Of course there are many different types of contractors, but we wanted to look at the general path, and what the ever shifting industry looks like today. For that. We brought back Adam Gonzales from our second episode, who told the story of being a security contractor during the American occupation of Iraq. When he got back to the states Adam says he was lost.

Adam Gonzales: [01:17](#) I went to work for an electrical company out of Chicago. I would think about the places that I've been, look back at the job site, and I would cry, to myself in the morning, in my truck, thinking, "I don't want to go in there. I don't belong here." That was an extremely low point for me. And then right around that time I met my wife, or who is now my wife, a former army captain, and we started a business venture designed to helping transitioning veterans. I wanted to help men and women not go through the same pitfalls that I went through while trying to transition. And we called it Silent Professionals.

Michelle Harven: [02:02](#) So we brought in Adam and Susan Gonzales, the husband and wife team behind Silent Professionals, to talk about their experience helping contractors find work.

Adam Gonzales: [02:13](#) Yeah. So I guess Silent Professionals pretty much began with Susan and I really. It was a joint effort trying to solve two kind of

problems. One, it was to help me with my position as a director of operations for a hostage rescue company, and also it was to help transitioning veterans, and veterans find employment within the private military executive protection, and defense, and security guard spaces. Then I think, we were really interested and focused on helping transitioning veterans, and veterans primarily because of the struggles that I faced when I tried to transition from a life working overseas, in the private military sector, coming home to the US, realizing that I had no network whatsoever, and the challenges and the pitfalls that I faced in trying to make that transition, trying to identify ways we could alleviate some of those challenges, or other veterans trying to transition.

Susan Gonzales: [03:28](#)

And so, Adam was putting a lot of his friends to work, and I was really impressed by how many times he could do this. And it wouldn't matter how fast he had to put somebody to work, or where in the world it was. It could have been on any continent, and somehow he was able to get a friend that he worked with in the past. And that really spoke to me about how experienced he actually was in this industry, and how many, over a decade back-to-back of just doing all these unique jobs in the private military and private security industry. And so what I really saw when I met Adam was that when he ... I mean he's always been what I would've thought, emotionally well transitioned, but when I thought he was really coming into his own, and really truly satisfied with his professional life, was when he put his friends to work.

Susan Gonzales: [04:17](#)

And I thought that that was almost a form of therapy, is what I called it. Because there's no, really, other way to describe it when I see what sort of satisfaction that actually brought him. And it was more than just, "Hey, I put my friend friends to work." It was almost like it put all this meaning to all those years that he spent overseas. And I thought, "You know, I do work on the Internet. And I do analytics and I have some business partners, and we do stuff where we're optimizing how people find things on the Internet." And so I said, "You know, why don't I create a platform where we can take all these people who are looking for jobs, like the jobs that you are doing, and give them, basically utilize your experiences and your networks?"

Susan Gonzales: [04:59](#)

And the way we utilize them with having this relationship with the employer is that needed to fill these jobs, and we can connect these people looking for jobs with the jobs that actually needed to be filled with very experienced people. And that's the essence of how we came up with Silent Professionals. And of course, it's been every day we're growing. And so it's constantly

evolving, but that's how it all started. But you know, to put over now 2,000 people, 2,000 combat vets in jobs, in just over a year, there's a level of satisfaction there for me as well. But it's like putting all of his buddies to work.

Michelle Harven: [05:34](#) And can you go into a more like what Silent Professionals is? Because it's more than a job board. Correct?

Susan Gonzales: [05:40](#) It is. On the face, it's a job board. But there's so much that happens behind the scenes. We do vetting on both the candidate and we do vetting on the employer. So we have, every candidate that comes through and they're applying for a job. As long as they meet the qualifications, they'll start the vetting process. And so what the vetting process is, we reach out, and this is where Adam's experience really comes in. Him and a bunch of his friends and his network, and we say, "Who in this community? This person claims to have done X job in this community. Who do we know in that community today?" And usually it's just one degree of separation away. It's really seldom more than that. And then we confirm that this person is indeed who they say they are and have done the jobs that they've said they've done.

Susan Gonzales: [06:27](#) The other side, we do vet employers as well. So there are a lot of people who are starting security companies. There's tons of them. Some people have heard of. Many most people have not heard of. And it doesn't mean they're not reputable, but you wouldn't know if they're repeatable or not. We make sure that they are. And what we do is, we make sure that we're able to reach out to our communities and say, "Who has heard of this person, this company? Have they paid their contractors? Have they paid them on time? Have they paid them what they said they would?" These things seem like everybody would do that. But I will tell you, a lot of people do not. I think that ... I hate the term mercenary, but people like to use that term. And I think because of that, people almost treat people that are working in this industry as if they're expendable.

Susan Gonzales: [07:19](#) And because of that, you're doing this expendable type of job and they treat them in a way where, "I might not pay you." Or, "I changed my mind. I'm not going to pay you this." It's a shame to do that in general, because you wouldn't think that anyone would do that because it's their word. But there's a lot of bad players out there. And when it comes to, you're really putting your security and your safety and your lives on the line, we want to make sure that that's not happening. We've seen it with pretty dire consequences, not through us, but just friends of Adams, who have worked for people like that, and on a really

bad case, we know of people personally who have committed suicide unfortunately, because they couldn't make finances meet and the pressure got too great for them. And so we really try to mitigate that as much as we can.

Desmon Farris: [08:07](#) It's all that. Why do you think it's hard for veterans or combat vets? Why are they having a hard time finding jobs after military service?

Susan Gonzales: [08:15](#) I think it's a matter of translation. I'm a Language major in my background, so I'm speaking in terms of how a linguist would, but translation is a two-way street. I think everybody likes to talk about a transition for veterans as if there is a one directional path for veterans. "What you did there is great. Thank you very much for your service. But you really need to find another trade because you, you don't have one here." And that's what it's implying even though people would say, "No, no, no. That's not what we mean." But essentially, it's the subtlety of it all. It's, "We need to find these transitions." It's just in everything that we say. What you did before doesn't have a direct correlation to what we're doing today. So we have to ... Maybe there's a one-to-one, if there are hard skills. Like you were an IT guy, so I could see how you fit in the civilian world. But if you are an infantry man, how does that translate, so to speak, into the civilian job?

Susan Gonzales: [09:16](#) And because of that, I think that's the issue that a lot of corporations don't necessarily understand how these softer, or I've heard other people say, in which I prefer this term, is essential skills rather than soft skills. These essential skills are not something that they know how to tangibly measure. And because of that, it's hard to bring these guys that have incredible skills and that they can bring into the work force. But they don't know, the civilian side doesn't necessarily offer, retooling, or reeducation of a couple of hard skills that can take those essential skills and combine them. And it all requires a different level of skill. Because of that, you might have a corporate entity, a large oil and gas company, and they'll say, "well, I'm not really sure what I'm looking for here." And if they do go into the military, they might say, "I want a special forces guy." And they don't know what they're really looking for. They just want them to be really good, or elite, in their mind.

Susan Gonzales: [10:18](#) But there are many people who are elite at certain types of skills, that may not be special forces. And so we're here to help them educate that, because we already know they're already willing to see that. They're already willing to see these combat arms guys come back and say, "Security makes sense. We look

at you and your ability to talk to us in a corporate setting, and we trust you because you've given us those results." From there, when we put the combat arms guys into these really high responsibility security positions, they're also able to impress them with all the other soft skills. So getting the right guys into the right security job is incredibly important. And I don't think that that has happened before. That's what we're doing.

Adam Gonzales: [11:00](#)

In addition to that, one of the other things we're doing and having some pretty good success is reeducating companies on their requirements for a specific job. One of the things we're really trying to work hard on, is when companies come to us and they say, "Well, we need a guy who is a former combat arms, or comes from a soft background, but he has to have a degree." Well, a lot of times, and I guess the reasoning for having this degree is identified kind of loosely in that. Well it is direct translation to, on a leadership, or on a report writing, whatever the case may be. We educate them in a way to where we explain that that degree can be substituted for experience. And we really explain what those experiences are that these guys have, that actually meet the requirements of this job without actually having a degree.

Adam Gonzales: [12:07](#)

And we've actually been able to change job requirements of extremely large companies. Multi-billion dollar companies. Eliminating the requirement for having a degree, which really is extremely helpful, because a lot of these guys who have the backgrounds that they want aren't going to have a degree because they were out making it happen. Everyday deployed, whatever the case may be. But their leadership experience, their report writing is far above that of what you could achieve with actually having a bachelor's degree. So a lot of that is just kind of through reeducation. And we really do take the time to push those points. And we're actually kind of seeing that it is actually making a difference.

Michelle Harven: [12:54](#)

So companies definitely need to be reeducated, right? Vets who are trying to get into this industry, what do they need to know? What are some common misconceptions that veterans have when they're trying to get into the contracting field?

Adam Gonzales: [13:13](#)

So it depends on, if veterans are trying to get into the private military space, that's going to be an easier path to navigate, than trying to get into the executive protection space. Private military, a lot of these contracts from these companies only require, maybe coming from a combat arms MOS, one year of deployment and time. And that's the general. There's always contracts in the private military space that are higher paying,

and more specialized. But the general, overall kind of contracts that we see in the private military space, combat arms is usually a requirement, or combat arms, combat support. It really opens it up a little more.

Adam Gonzales: [14:03](#) On the executive protection side, typically veterans will not be able to cross into the executive protection space without having a training or experience. We hear a lot of veterans say, "Well I did PSD work while I was in the military." Well unfortunately, PSD work doesn't ... It's not a direct translation into executive protection.

Desmon Farris: [14:29](#) So what's PSD work?

Adam Gonzales: [14:30](#) Yeah. So PSD is protective security detail. And so, this is usually given to generals in the military, where usually, the generals will have an MP team, or a security forces team, or even some infantry guys, an infantry squad trained up in PSD to provide protective services while they travel all throughout the countryside. Executive protection on the other hand is usually a lot smaller scale. It's usually a corporate environment, ultra high net worth client is the person that's being protected. The protectors, who are actually providing the protection, it's usually like one guy. It could be a small team, but usually it's one guy. So the mindset is all around completely different.

Desmon Farris: [15:20](#) So it's like when in movies, and they're like moving up to the big boss in the penthouse, and there's like four or five guys around him?

Adam Gonzales: [15:27](#) That is correct. Yeah.

Desmon Farris: [15:29](#) So like the lead guy. Those are the guys that you guys are putting in those positions.

Adam Gonzales: [15:32](#) Correct. Correct. Yes. So that would be like the executive protection team.

Desmon Farris: [15:36](#) Oh, okay. Okay.

Susan Gonzales: [15:37](#) And I would say that there so many different, for the people who are looking to break into the space, there's a whole spectrum of jobs. And I think that's what surprises people. Because even the experienced people will come through, and there may be a wider swath of jobs that the very experienced, and when I say very experienced, I mean they have a lot of very focused military experience in combat time, and they have law

enforcement time domestically, and they've done some private work for a client. And there are people like that. So what always gets me are people who are like, "I'm so much more qualified. I'm so over qualified for this job." And nothing really irritates us more than when we hear that, because that is already discounting what other qualified people are out there. You might think that you have a decade of whatever experience that you have, but you're not even thinking about the guy that's got more than a decade that you have, has done more in that time, and has additional experience on top, with some extra skills sets.

Susan Gonzales: [16:41](#) And these clients, they're not like the military, where we're filling an army for private side. We're filling a single billet, and it is extraordinarily selective. So people might say, "Yeah, I have the skillset." Well don't forget it's not the army. So you don't need to fill thousands of people. This is a single person that's going to get selected. And oftentimes even if you have the skills, and then we are able to present to our clients, multiple people, it's sometimes comes down to the personality. It often comes down to the personality. So now you've got a few handful of people, and the person just doesn't like the way you look, the way you dress. They don't like the way you speak. They don't like any of that because you are going to be next to this person, while they're conducting business. And with some of these people, they're very cognizant about what's their whole image.

Michelle Harven: [17:37](#) So it's highly competitive.

Susan Gonzales: [17:38](#) Extraordinarily competitive. And it's not to discourage people, but it's also to manage your expectations of thinking. The worst thing is, people coming out and saying, "Oh, be easy for me to get this job." Well, it isn't going to be that easy because there are really stellar people out there in the space. But it's also not impossible. Just come humble, and understand what your competition is here, and how to make yourself better.

Michelle Harven: [18:04](#) So what should people do if they're trying to ... They're a veteran, they're out, and they want to become a private contractor, a security contractor, or military.

Susan Gonzales: [18:15](#) So I would say, it depends on which realm. So if they want a job, let's just say working, we'll expand the private military side and just say, "Anybody working with the US government as a contractor, or as a security contractor." That's the first thing that people have to be aware. I think most people just think, "A defense contractor." Well, there's multiple categories. So there is Department of Defense, there's Department of State, there's

Department of Justice. There's all these different departments, and why that's important is because they all have different clearance requirements. They're all different clearances.

Susan Gonzales: [18:50](#)

I was an intelligence officer and I didn't even realize. I don't know. Maybe some people will laugh at this, but I didn't realize until I started doing this, that there were more than DOD clearances. And that might come as a surprise to people, because I didn't deal with anything other than DOD clearances. And so, there are different clearance requirements, and they all don't all translate to each other. So department's, a Defense secret clearance does not equate to a Department of State secret clearance. So you have to be aware, when you want anything with the Defense Department, nine times out of 10, probably even more, you either need to already have the clearance, or you need to be able to get a clearance. So if that's going to be an issue, for instance, "I have bad credit. I've been arrested since I got out." Or whatever those things may be, a felony, misdemeanor or any of those things, you're not going to pass a background check. You probably will not qualify for a defense sector private security job, because you're not going to pass the clearance investigation requirement.

Susan Gonzales: [19:50](#)

And don't try to be slick and get through the cracks, because if you do, and you get flagged, you're flagged across the board. It's a clearance issuing authority. And so you get flagged on a background check, it's going to pop up the next time. So, be honest with yourself and your assessment. "Did I do anything that's going to jeopardize me from getting a clearance?" And if you are, straighten out your record first before you go for that, because you don't want to get flagged. Once you're flagged, it's not impossible, but it is definitely an uphill battle.

Adam Gonzales: [20:21](#)

As it pertains to executive protection, it's not unheard of, for guys to come out of the military, and transition into the ERP space. It's a path that some guys do go, but understand that one of the big things is, you will have to go to some type of training. You'll have to do a retooling of your current skill sets. You might have a lot of the soft skills needed, but you're going to need some of the hard skills. And unfortunately ,the military doesn't train you in these hard skills, and why would they? They have a specific mission, and that specific mission is very different from the executive protection mission.

Adam Gonzales: [21:06](#)

The best advice I could give is, if you're looking to get into EP, one, regardless of who you are, or where you come from, humble yourself. And you really want to take whatever comes your way. So whatever opportunity comes your way, even if it's

only a one day gig, or it lasts for a week, or it might be a month, but the pay is really not that great, take it, because you're got to start to build your experience. But if you think you're going to walk into a 100, \$150,000 a year executive protection job, it's not going to happen. Or the chances of it happening are going to be far slimmer, you would think so.

Susan Gonzales: [21:49](#)

So if you were to get an executive protection job, what is happening is, you're protecting the CEO of Twitter, this CEO of Facebook. They're not leaving their security, and their family's security to somebody who isn't known. Probably multiple layers, and that's why it's impossible. It's not because you don't have the makings of somebody who could do well in a position like that. But even if you go through the schooling, it's a lot of these networks, and that you've had to have this reputation where people trust you. And that's why it's so hard to get into it, in that you've had to have that experience doing that for somebody else first.

Desmon Farris: [22:30](#)

I've noticed some keywords coming up. You keep saying hard skills, soft skills and network. These are the three words that I keep, or three phrases I keep hearing come up. So can you explain, maybe a couple of these things that you mean. Hard skills, some of these things, you mean when you say soft skills, and I know everybody knows network, but can you explain it in that space?

Adam Gonzales: [22:54](#)

Yeah. So I'll touch on a network and the space. The community is so small that like your name is going to get out there and you're going to start establishing a reputation. And you want to work really hard to build that reputation, and you want to work really hard to guard that reputation, because that's one of the biggest factors that could get you employment, or lose you employment.

Desmon Farris: [23:24](#)

So hard skills or anything that's-

Adam Gonzales: [23:26](#)

Trainable. So like, we have a lot of jobs that require hard skills, like on a DDM, which is a defensive designated marksman. Essentially, it's a sniper. So, that is a hard skill that you were taught in the military, that is going to directly translate to a job within the private military, private security space, providing you meet a few other qualifications. And so, another hard skill would be, that's like a direct translation into the private military private security space, would be like you're a paramedics, you're a canine handlers, your dog handlers. Any of those types of skill sets are hard skills, and our skills that will carry you into the next chapter.

Desmon Farris: [24:12](#) So Microsoft Word. I got taught that that could be considered a hard skill, because I don't know, maybe I'm doing a report. So what would a soft skill be? That's why I'm confused about, so I can know.

Adam Gonzales: [24:28](#) Yeah. So that's, that's probably a little less tangible in that, it's more developed probably through experience. You develop through your experiences. Iraq, Afghanistan is a very different war where there is no uniformed enemy. The enemy is mixed into a local populace. And so a soft skill would be like for example, over time you're able to, maybe identify, "Well, you know what? This guy's probably a bad guy." Based on a whole bunch of variables that I have gained through experience, and, "This guy's a good guy," would be a soft skill. It doesn't mean you could engage the bad guy, but it's just a way for you to identify, "Hey, you know what? This guy's a bad guy." You wouldn't be able to know that if you were just brought right in without any experience. So that would be identifying a soft skill.

Susan Gonzales: [25:38](#) Yeah. And you know, soft skills are so difficult to kind of give examples for, because depending on who's listening, depending on if you have the skill or not, it's just really, really ... If you don't have the skill, it's like, "well, I'm not sure what you're talking about in this context." And then there are so many different contexts. But the best analogy I can bring is I remember when I used to work for an oil company, and they would come to me with a military resume. And they had such a wonderful recruiting program. It was a superb recruiting program, at Exxon Mobil. And what they ended up doing was giving me a military resume, because I was like one of a handful of military hires that they had.

Susan Gonzales: [26:16](#) And so they would say, "I can't tell if this resume's good or not. Can you read it?" And now they're aptly getting by the hard skills. They could always look, and this is where people can universally, from the military, understand it. You can look at a military resume if you have never been in the military, say, "wow, that seems so impressive." But you can almost tell from the experiences, is they're like, yeah. Even if they did all those things, you're going to say, "Their level of skill in these areas is about here." So you can tell by the kind of assignments.

Susan Gonzales: [26:45](#) So there's a certain level of judgment we're talking about. So that's how we measure those soft skills. That's where the experience really matters in the betting process, is when we can look through what is essentially a military resume and say, "Based on the series of assignments of this person had, and the amount of time that they did, and the level of what they've

done in each, this is telling me that they should have this type of judgment. There's a certain amount of maturity." It's all these different factors together. If you've ever met a person who is really, really well schooled, has a Master's, PHD, and not really doing anything against those people that are academics, but seemed to have absolutely no ability otherwise, common sense or otherwise, we always say common sense, but it's actually this whole cluster of what I would call soft skills. And that's the best way to describe the soft skill part. Because there's no part of a resume that we would look at specifically, to identify soft skill. It's kind of a-

Michelle Harven: [27:45](#) It's like reading in between the lines a little bit?

Susan Gonzales: [27:47](#) It is. And really understanding what it would take to do these things.

Michelle Harven: [27:50](#) So the job market has fluctuated a bit. It always fluctuates with, you know, what's happening in the world. What is it like now? And I feel like there is this one stereotype that contracting brings in a lot of money. What do you say to those type of people? What is the job market like today?

Adam Gonzales: [28:09](#) Yeah. So contracting in the early days, it did bring in a lot of money. In the early days, meaning, the early days of the Iraq and Afghan war. So, a typical security contractor was making at least \$500 a day, seven days a week. And that's on the low end. On the high end, guys could be making upwards of, you know, 20,000 a month, 600 a day, approximately. Or somewhere in between 600, 650 a day. 600 day puts you at 18,000 a month. But security contracts could be paying as low as 150, \$200 a day. So if you think about it, \$200 a day comes out to about 6,000 a month. A guy could go get a job as a laborer on the highway construction crew, probably making about that much money, and not put in his life in harm's way.

Adam Gonzales: [29:05](#) I personally, when I first started in early '04, I was making \$500 a day, 15,000 a month. But just shortly after that, a few years later in 2009 I jumped on a contract and making \$200 a day. I jumped on that for different reasons. But it's not as high paying as people like to think. Additionally, there is no insurance. There is no your medical insurance, there's no dental, there are no additional benefits. You get that money, and you have to make smart choices for yourself and your family. And additionally, there is no life insurance, taxes aren't taken out. So that's a responsibility that falls on you. At the end of the year, you have to pay taxes. As a contractor, it's a pretty large percentage. And

additionally today, contractors face, in addition to American taxes, they face Iraqi taxes, and Afghan taxes.

Desmon Farris: [30:14](#) Is that on top of having to pay taxes here?

Susan Gonzales: [30:18](#) No, no it's not. And so they can get some sort of credit for having to pay that Afghan tax, but they're paying that to the Afghan government

Adam Gonzales: [30:26](#) Upfront. They have to pay that upfront to the Afghan government. At the end of the year when they do their taxes in the US-

Desmon Farris: [30:33](#) Hold on. So you're telling me, I take a job where I make it \$150,000 and I got to pay 20% up front, in order to do it?

Adam Gonzales: [30:40](#) Yes.

Desmon Farris: [30:42](#) And then if the contract got canceled because of the employer cancel, I still paid that?

Adam Gonzales: [30:47](#) Well 20% ... So like, if you get paid once a month, well 20% of that is going to Afghan taxes. Each check. It's being withdrawn from your-

Susan Gonzales: [30:57](#) Yeah. You're not paying it retroactively after the fact. It's coming out of your check.

Desmon Farris: [31:03](#) Okay. Because you say upfront, I'm like ...

Susan Gonzales: [31:04](#) No.

Desmon Farris: [31:07](#) What happens if this gets canceled? Oh man. But 20%?

Susan Gonzales: [31:10](#) That's steep.

Desmon Farris: [31:13](#) Yeah. And with Michelle, I had did some research, with the employment aspect, looking of course, for myself. And it's very competitive now here at home, and to do the abroad, that sometimes you're not sure what type of job you're looking at. Whether it's here or abroad because of the pay. You're like, "Okay, oh, this is cool. It's good amount of money." And it's like, "Wait? I got to go where?" Versus before, it'd be like, "Okay, 200,000. I know what I got to do. But man, that's \$200,000 I could be making." It's a grayer area now. It's where, even when I was looking for a position, I was like, that risk-reward isn't there anymore like it used to be.

Adam Gonzales: [31:55](#) Yeah.

Susan Gonzales: [31:55](#) And I think that's why so many people who were in their private military space, especially in the heyday of the war, they were always looking for going overseas. Now, all those seasoned guys, or the guys that are even mid-career, they are looking for those EP jobs. That's why they are so lucrative, because they pay these high rates. But they're not usually ... They're forced single billet, and they're not usually a full-time.

Adam Gonzales: [32:20](#) Right. Yeah. So that's one of the biggest points. A lot of these contracts are still contracts. And they might pay a lot. They might pay on a seven, \$800 a day, but it's a one week contract. And so, when that contract ends, you're back out there looking for a job. And guys could jump on these contracts, making six, seven, \$800 a day, but because there's not that much work available, they might only be making 30 grand a year. And so it's like, "Okay, well I'm doing the math. That much money per day. But unfortunately there's not that much work available." Now, if you get lucky and you're able to land yourself a full-time job within executive protection, then you could be making a steady, somewhere between 50 and a hundred grand, 120, 130 kind of that range is kind of average. But that could be in very high cost of living areas in the country. So-

Desmon Farris: [33:30](#) And with a lot of private companies coming to the head, like with working with the DOD and the military, are you guys seeing a melding of these two worlds? Because, okay, say SpaceX and this other company are working with a DOD company. Or say is like Google, "Alright. Cool. We're going to do this with the Pentagon. But we're going to do it in this place". Is there a meld where it's-

Susan Gonzales: [34:00](#) There is, but very limited. And you're seeing a little bit more. If you've been on Silent Professionals lately, you'll see a little bit more. But there is definitely a lot more collaboration on the cyber, and IT side as you can imagine. The information security space is really the next war. If we're already in it, the information war with China and Russia and all the big players of the world. So we need, to be working with private industry in which we are. And so you'll see a lot of jobs like that, that are working with our war fighters, that are also working with them. The best that private industry has to offer. But they tend to be more there.

Susan Gonzales: [34:36](#) And then you have smaller needs of people that are physical security to protect infrastructure sites and things like that. There is still less grade of a need, but it's just a smaller in

quantity, or those types of things, depending on the contract that we're talking about. So those exist, but they're all revolving around that information security, IT ... What used to be called IT. It's more like a cyber, info-security sector.

Desmon Farris: [35:02](#) I do want to ask about ... We talked about all this. What is it like for women getting into this?

Susan Gonzales: [35:10](#) Well, I would say that-

Adam Gonzales: [35:11](#) They're high demand.

Susan Gonzales: [35:13](#) Yeah. There's high demand, but I will say what it's like for them. One is, we don't get a lot of the applicants that are female. Every female that has applied, maybe with the exception of one, every female that has applied for a job with us, has been at stellar candidate. And the employers have loved the women that we have. We just haven't had a lot because there aren't a lot of women who have this combination of skillsets, but they do exist. And the ones that are applying, are getting in. No problems. They usually have, honestly, maybe it's just a statistical thing because there's so few of them applying, but they just have less issues. There's no issues with their background check. There's nothing. They're stellar candidates for all kinds of jobs.

Susan Gonzales: [35:51](#) We even had a female DDM recently, which would seem impossible, but she was a secret service sniper. For that reason, she didn't need the 12 months overseas, because her time as a secret service agent counted towards that. She was awesome. Employer loved her. It's just, there aren't a lot of females that meet all the qualifications just because one, a lot of them require a combat arms. Or on the private side, they are high in demand for-

Adam Gonzales: [36:23](#) There's a strong need for females in the executive protection space. So if you're in the military, and it really doesn't matter what you did in the military, and you're interested in the space, go to a good EP school, and you'll get picked up relatively quickly. If you've got a strong work ethic, you're going to get picked up quickly because you've got a lot of ... Women tend to be a little better with children. Ultra-high net worth clients, whether it's male or female, might want a woman with their children. Or if you have an ultra-high net worth client who is a female, she might want a female. And it also helps to have a female, because a female could go into places with a female client that men can't.

Susan Gonzales: [37:11](#) And we also see a lot of, Male-female ... There aren't a whole lot of male-female teams. So it's nice to have a female. It just doesn't look as weird when you just have a male kind of tailing. It could be subtle.

Adam Gonzales: [37:22](#) There's always a security presence.

Susan Gonzales: [37:23](#) Yeah. So you be a man and woman having dinner, and that very much pulls down the suspicion that you're pulling any sort of surveillance at all. So it's very, very useful to have a female agent. And so they're high in demand. It's just, not a lot of females.

Michelle Harven: [37:40](#) I wanted to give time for just both of you to say anything else that you think is important for people to know, who want to start working in contracting, or don't know where to start.

Adam Gonzales: [37:53](#) Thanks for bringing that up. For people coming out of the military especially, if you're still in the military, and you're getting ready to separate, and you're a month out, even up to a year out, go ahead and create a profile, apply for jobs because we have actually placed guys into positions, even with being a year out right?

Susan Gonzales: [38:17](#) Yeah. That's the max. They can't really actually touch you until you have your DD214, right?

Adam Gonzales: [38:22](#) Sure.

Susan Gonzales: [38:22](#) So they can't do it. But what they can start doing is like, getting you the information, especially the more skilled it is, to prep yourself for, maybe there's a train op, or anything like that involved. But as soon as you get your DD214, they can start in processing you, and processing you new for any sort of clearance that you may need. So you're cutting down on that time before they can put boots on the ground.

Adam Gonzales: [38:44](#) And while you're still in, you really want to ensure that your clearances are up to date. Have some time before they expire if possible. And you want to make sure everything that you have, that's especially a hard skill, is documented. So if you went to Army Sniper School, Marine Scout Sniper School, any schools that you went to, make sure it's documented. You have graduation documents. But even more importantly, when you do go for separation, ensure that it is on your DD214, because if it is not under DD214, a lot of these government departments will not recognize you and you will not be eligible for

employment, especially if you're trying to get into specific private security, private military kind of roles. And a lot of those roles are you're on a static security, you're on a PSD positions, or DDMs, on a paramedics, canine guys. Yup. Yup.

Susan Gonzales: [39:50](#) Yeah. And I will say that of course completion certificates do count, but say you're applying directly through a company, and your DD214 doesn't have your school in it, they'll just put you in the reject pile, because they go through thousands of resumes every single day. So you'll get lost in that shuffle. And so making sure your DD214 is correct before you get out is incredibly important. It's a lot easier than to have to furnish all the supplemental documents, but also, delays your application. So other people can get selected before you. And more often than not, we see people's DD214s are incorrect. And the most important thing is, make sure your deployment dates are correct, because chances are they are not. So make sure that you are checking to make sure all your deployments are included, and start and end dates. If contract requires you have 12 months of deployment time, you need to meet 365 days. If you are 364 days, you will get rejected, because that is the contract term. And the companies out there cannot violate that contract term or they'll get penalized, and the contract will be pulled from them.

Adam Gonzales: [40:54](#) So if you're in the military and you want to get into the private military space, private security space, you're going to want to be in a combat arms MOS, a combat support MOS. And you want to make sure you have at least 12 months of deployment time. It has to be at least 365 days, like Susan said. It can't be anything less. So if you've got to jump ship to another unit to get that extra deployment time in, that's what you got to do to make things happen. So, having a security clearance really, really opens up your doors. So at least having a DOD, and a Secret, is really going to open up your opportunities. If you have anything higher than a Secret, of course, all of that really, really helps as well.

Michelle Harven: [41:41](#) Thanks to Adam and Susan Gonzalez of Silent Professionals for giving us insight into what they've learned while building their business.

Desmon Farris: [41:48](#) And the next episode we'll hear from Evan Hayford, who worked with the CIA and did over 37 trips as a contractor.

Evan Heyford: [41:54](#) They said they had a line of probably 15 to 20 Iraqi army gun trucks that were pursuing us through the city, shooting at us. And at that point, you have to keep your wits about you.

Desmon Farris: [42:07](#) Don't forget to subscribe. And while you're there, leave us a review. You can also let us know your thoughts podcast@stripes.com. Also, follow us on Twitter for updates [@StarsandStripes](#).

Michelle Harven: [42:19](#) Forced for Hire supervising editors are Bob Reid, and Terry Leonard. Digital team lead and editor is Michael Darnell.

Desmon Farris: [42:25](#) Thanks for listening.

Speaker 6: [42:28](#) This is Force for Hire.